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ABSTRACT

The University New Student Census was administered to 935 randomly selected students out of 3,388 incoming freshmen at the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP). This report offers findings concerning the general characteristics of the freshmen, their reasons for choosing UMCP. The survey also gathered data on their academic orientation (including their academic development, school work attitudes, philosophy and objectives, expectations of college courses, reasons for wanting to complete college, and career goals) and their extracurricular pursuits, including leisure time, cultural pastimes, and religion. Selected findings include: half of the students stated that UMCP was their first choice; 33% chose UMCP because of either overall or departmental academic excellence; Scholastic Aptitude Test scores averaged 1,085 for all incoming freshmen; almost half of the students indicated an interest in educational/vocational counseling; and 10% were interested in emotional/social counseling. (JDD)

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UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

College Park, Maryland

A PROFILE OF INCOMING FRESHMEN AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, COLLEGE PARK, 1989

Deborah A. Gerrity and William E. Sedlacek

Research Report #22 - 89

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The computer time for this research has been supported in full through the facilities at the Conputer Science Center of the University of Maryland, College Park. Data were collected with the cooperation of the Orientation Office, Division of Student Affairs, University of Maryland, College Park.

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Summary

The **University New Student Census (UNSC)** was administered to 935 students during the 1989 freshman orientation. Fifty-two percent of the respondents were male and more than two/thirds were White. Seventy percent of the 1989 incoming freshmen were planning to live in residence halls while most of the remainder planned to continue to live with their parent/guardian. More women than men indicated a preference to live on campus.

About a third of the incoming freshmen had gained their impressions of UMCP from visits to the campus. Half stated that UMCP was their first choice and about half said that their decision to come to UMCP was most influenced by their parent or other family member. Thirty-three percent chose UMCP because of either overall or departmental academic excellence.

Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores averaged 1,085 for all UMCP incoming freshmen. Career issues were important to incoming students. The majority of students indicated that learning skills applicable to career goals and deciding upon a career goal were high priorities. Ninety-nine percent of the incoming freshmen intended to earn at least a baccalaureate degree; a large percentage planned to earn a post-baccalaureate degree. Both females and males indicated that they would complete their degree because it was the only way that they could enter their chosen profession or get into graduate or professional school.

Sixty-six percent of the students felt that their personal philosophy or religious faith was very or fairly adequate as a guide for their outlook and behavior; 12% felt it was inadequate. Almost half of the students indicated an interest in educational/vocational counseling, and 10% were interested in emotional/social counseling.

A PROFILE OF INCOMING FRESHMEN AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND COLLEGE PARK, 1989-1990

The **University New Student Census (UNSC)** is administered annually during freshman orientation at the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP). In the summer of 1989, 935 randomly-chosen students (from 3,388 incoming freshmen) were surveyed to obtain a broad overview of demographic and attitudinal characteristics of first year college students. The following report presents results from a selection of the **UNSC** items. Item percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Significant differences between men and women ($p<.05$) and, for comparison, national data from a variety of sources will be included.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

Demographics. Slightly more than half of the **UNSC** respondents were male (52%); more than two/thirds were White (70%). These percentages differed slightly from those for the total incoming freshman population at UMCP and from 1986 and 1987 National surveys (see Table 1). For all minorities completing the **UNSC** except Blacks, there were equal distributions of males and females. For Blacks, there were almost twice as many female freshmen as males.

Background. Most of the students had previously resided in suburban locales (70%), although 16% were from small towns and rural areas. Less than half of the students had lived most of their lives in neighborhoods as racially-mixed as the College Park campus (greater than or equal to 25% of other races). A large majority of the students (82%) had gone to a high school where more than half of the graduating class enrolled in college.

TABLE 1: General Characteristics of 1989 Incoming Freshmen

	UNSC Census	All 1989 UMCP Freshmen	ACE National Statistics*
Sex			
Male	52%	54%	48%
Female	48%	46%	52%
Race			
American Indian	<1%	<1%	1%
Asian	11%	12%	5%
Black	13%	16%	4%
Hispanic	3%	4%	2%
White	70%	66%	89%
Other	2%	<1%	1%
Foreign	N/A	2%	N/A

*ACE figures for sex are from 1986 preliminary survey figures. Race is from 1987 preliminary survey figures.
Source: American Council on Education/Macmillan Series on Higher Education, 1989-90 Fact Book on Higher Education.
Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Residence. Seventy percent of the 1989 freshmen were planning to live in residence halls, while most of the rest planned to continue to live with their parent/guardian (25%). A five year plan adopted by the Governor and the Maryland General Assembly in 1987 to enhance UMCP calls for an overall decrease in campus enrollment by 20%. In the past two years, fewer freshmen have been admitted as part of this reduction. Therefore, enrollment was limited for the Fall of 1989 at the University of Maryland, College Park and, as enrollment decreases, a larger percentage of the incoming freshmen live on campus. According to the Office of Commuter Affairs, this translated into a 70/30 ratio of residents to commuters for 1989-90, compared to the 60/40 ratio of 1988-89. When asked if they would prefer to commute rather than live on campus, 65% of the students disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 22% preferred to commute. There was a significant difference between males and females, with more women than men preferring to live on campus. Male commuters were more likely than female commuters to drive their own cars (24% vs. 18%).

Work. A median income of about $1,200 for 1988 was reported by the incoming freshmen. Generally, males earned more than females. Fifty-two percent of incoming freshmen planned to work during the 1989-90 school year; 46% of those who work will do so off campus (male = 54%; female = 38%).

WHY UMCP?

General Impressions. About a third of the incoming freshmen had gained their impressions of UMCP from visits to the campus, and another 27% had read University publications. A small percentage (9%) had read college guides or had

seen media releases (2%), while 29% had gathered their information about the campus from other sources.

Preferences. Half of the new students reported that UMCP was their first choice for a college education, and an additional 27% placed the campus as their second choice, whereas 4% had chosen UMCP last. Males were more likely than females to have ranked UMCP first (53% vs. 46%). National data published by the American Council on Education (Astin, 1988) showed that 70% of freshmen enroll in the college of their first choice, 23% in their second choice, and approximately 3% went to a school which they ranked less than third.

Influences. For half of the incoming freshmen, the decision to come to UMCP was most influenced by their parent or other family member (49%). Individuals associated with the University influenced an additional 15% (students, alumni, faculty, staff, admissions officer), while 8% were influenced by their high school's staff or students. A large percentage (30%) indicated "other" (than the choices provided) as the person most influential in their decision to come to UMCP.

Reason for Enrolling. Thirty-three percent chose UMCP because of either overall or departmental academic excellence. Geographic location (23%) and cost (20%) were two additional reasons why UMCP was attractive to students. Other reasons for coming to UMCP included: "other" (10%), enrolled because a friend or a relative had attended UMCP (7%), not being accepted elsewhere (4%), athletic programs (3%), and suggestion of a high school teacher/counselor (1%).

UMCP's Reputation. Students were asked to indicate on a five-point Likert-type scale their level of agreement (from strongly agree [1] to strongly disagree [5])

with three statements about the reputation of UMCP compared to other institutions. The first statement was: "UMCP has a good academic reputation." Eighty-two percent agreed or strongly agreed while only 4% disagreed. Females indicated more agreement than males to this item. Forty-nine percent of the incoming freshmen agreed that "UMCP is considered a party school." Thirty-four percent believed that UMCP was known for its athletic teams.

ACADEMIC ORIENTATION

Present Academic Development. Due to a combination of the State Assembly's adoption of the Hoblitzell Commission's recommendation that UMCP's enrollment be reduced by over 20% from 1987 to 1991, and an increase in the number of applications for admission, the academic profile of incoming UMCP freshmen has changed. The UMCP Office of Undergraduate Admissions reported the average GPA (grade point average) for 1989 incoming freshmen as 3.03, up from 2.98 in 1988 and 2.90 in 1987. High school grades for the **UNSC** sample were reported as predominantly B or better (92%), with 1% of the 1989 incoming freshmen reporting less than a C+ GPA. There were significantly higher proportions of women in the A/A+ and B+ categories (24% and 40%) than men (15% and 33%). Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores averaged 1,085 (Math = 579; Verbal = 506) for all 1989 UMCP incoming freshmen (1988 = 1,057; 1987 = 1,034). In 1989, the average SAT score for students taking the test in Maryland was 914, which was a 24 point increase from 1979. Within the 22 states and the District of Columbia (where the SAT is the dominant college admission exam), the average 1989 SAT scores ranged from 836 to 932.

Most of the incoming freshmen reported spending up to eight hours of study time per week during high school (total = 70%; males = 76%; females = 64%). Eleven percent of the men and 19% of the women studied more than 12 hours per week. Sixty-two percent of the women and 51% of the men usually kept up with reading assignments. Men were more likely to spend all of their study time cramming (males = 26%; females = 19%), versus studying systematically ahead of time. Both men and women slightly agreed that they knew how to use a library well.

When asked, freshmen chose the following contributors to their development in the past year: interpersonal experiences (social life = 32% and friendships = 22%), school and study (contact with teachers/counselors = 6%; independent study = 6%; and coursework = 6%), job experience (16%), "other" (7%) and work with a group (social/political action = 3% or other type of group = 3%).

School Work Attitudes. Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with three **UNSC** statements about school work. On the average, students neither agreed nor disagreed that getting good grades was more important than the content of coursework (5% strongly agreed, 21% agreed, 32% neutral, 35% disagreed and 8% strongly disagreed), although females were more likely to disagree than males.

Thirty-two percent of the students found papers difficult to write whereas 43% did not. Both males and females disagreed (52%) or strongly disagreed (29%) with the statement "I usually fail to complete homework on time." There was a difference in intensity of disagreement with females more strongly disagreeing than males.

Philosophy and Objectives. Clark and Trow (1966) defined educational philosophy to reflect four student types: Vocational, Academic, Collegiate and Non-conforming. Students were asked to rank the four philosophies about education. Table 2 defines the four philosophies as illustrated in the **UNSC**. Vocational and Collegiate philosophies were ranked first by the largest percentages of students (36% and 33%, respectively); over twice as many individuals ranked Academic first compared to Non-conforming (21% vs. 8%). Women identified with the Collegiate philosophy more often than Vocational (38% vs. 32%), while men reversed the pattern (Vocational = 40%; Collegiate = 29%) (see Figure 1). Males were more likely than females to rank Non-conforming first or second (32% vs. 24%).

Men and women also placed different emphases on current educational objectives. The majority of students, in general, indicated that learning skills applicable to career goals (58%) and deciding upon a career goal (21%) were high priorities. One out of every ten freshmen wanted to become independent in their thinking or behavior (10%), or take a stand on things in which they believed (1%), but these two categories were more likely to be chosen by women than men (15% vs. 8%). General writing and speaking skills (3%), improvement in self-understanding (2%), and getting to know different kinds of people (1%) were also reported as educational objectives.

Ninety-nine percent of the incoming freshmen intended to earn at least a baccalaureate degree. A large percentage planned to earn a post-baccalaureate degree: MA/MS = 40%; Medical = 15%; Ph.D/ED.D = 12%; Law = 10%; "other" = 1%.

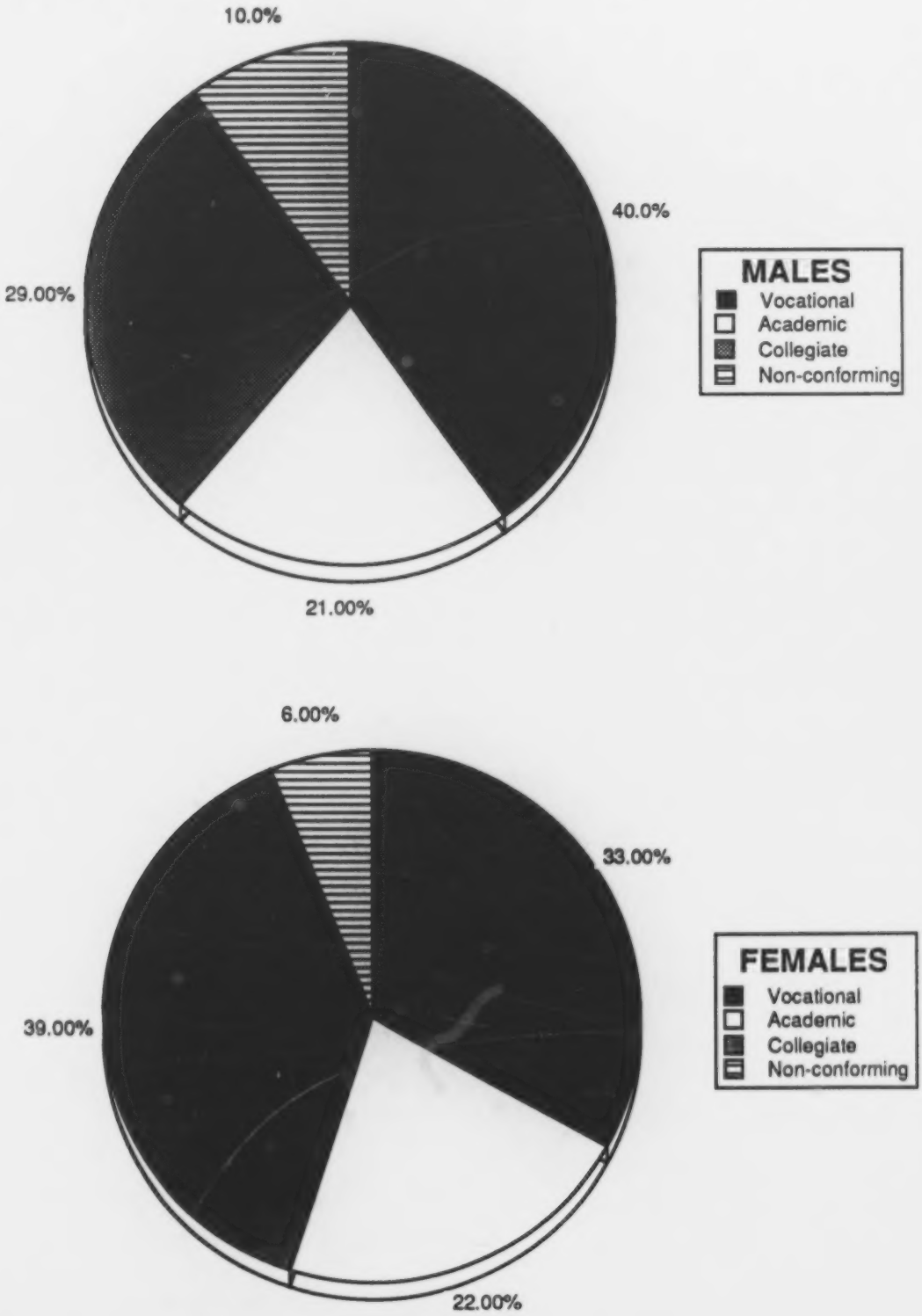
Table 2

Clark-Trow Educational Philosophies*

Philosophy A:	(Vocational) In college primarily to prepare for a career; view practical work experience as more important than intellectual discussion or extra-curricular activities.
Philosophy B:	(Academic) Attaches greatest importance to interest in ideas, pursuit of knowledge, and cultivation of the intellect; often spends leisure time reading books not required for course work and in intellectual discussion.
Philosophy C:	(Collegiate) Highly involved in social and other extracurricular activities. Considers learning from social relationships as an important part of college experience.
Philosophy D:	(Non-conforming) Emphasizes individual interest and styles, concern for personal identity, and is generally critical of and detached from the college, faculty and administration.

*Philosophies as written in **UNSC** except for labels within parentheses.

FIGURE 1: Educational Philosophies by Sex



Expectations of College Courses. Students were given four statements about what they expect coursework and faculty to be like. Although means for both sexes were close to neutral, males were more likely to believe that class assignments would be fully explained to them and to feel that instructors care about students. There were no gender differences regarding the expectation that channels for expression of student complaints would be readily available (53% agreed or strongly agreed and 15% disagreed or strongly disagreed), or that courses would be stimulating or exciting (65% agreed or strongly agreed and 9% disagreed or strongly disagreed).

Men listed study habits (30%) and math (21%) as the two academic areas in which they were weakest. Women reversed the order, with the highest percentage reporting weaknesses in math skills (30%) and the next highest group, study habits (21%). Women were more likely than men to report exam-taking (8% vs. 4%) and science courses (14% vs. 9%) as a weakness while men reported needing help with note-taking skills (7% vs. 2% for women).

Most students were not interested in designing their own major (45% disagreed or strongly disagreed and 37% neutral). Many felt that they needed some improvement in their skills/abilities, although there were significant differences between men and women regarding which ones needed improvement. Twenty-nine percent of both sexes chose public speaking as the developmental area on which they wanted to focus. Women wanted to be more assertive (26%), physically active (13%), socially skillful (10%) and have influence on others (10%). Men wanted to be more socially skillful (20%), assertive (20%), have influence on others (10%) and

be physically active (6%). Sixty-eight percent were interested in improving their reading; 42% spelling and 83% writing skills.

Retention. Students were given a list of nine reasons and asked which would most likely cause them to complete graduation requirements. Both females and males indicated that they would stay because a college degree was the only way that they could enter their chosen profession (males = 29%; females = 27%) or get into graduate or professional school (females = 28%; males = 22%). The third most popular reason was an interest in ideas and the pursuit of knowledge (males = 16%; females = 15%) followed by the belief that college graduates get better jobs (males = 15%; females = 11%). Expectations of parents and relatives (females = 3%; males = 2%), an opportunity to meet and know different people (females = 6%; males = 2%), gaining experience from extra-curricular activities (less than 1% for both males and females) and "other" (females = 5%; males = 4%) were specified by some students.

When asked what would be the most likely reason that they would leave before receiving a degree, more than one third of the students said that they were absolutely certain they would obtain a degree (female = 38%; male = 34%). The most frequently chosen reason for leaving was cost (females = 19%; males = 14%). Additional reasons included "other" (males = 13%; females = 11%), disinterest in study (male = 14%; female = 9%), accepting a good job (male = 12%; female = 11%), lack of scholastic ability (7% for both males and females), entering military service (male = 4%; female = 1%), insufficient reading or other academic skills (2% for both males and females), and marriage (females = 3%; males = 0%).

Ten percent of the incoming freshmen had seriously considered not going to college while 67% strongly disagreed and 17% disagreed that they had ever considered such a possibility. Although both men and women disagreed that they would probably drop out temporarily before they completed a bachelor's degree (49% strongly disagreed, 36% disagreed, 12% neutral, 3% agreed or strongly agreed), women were more likely to strongly disagree.

Career Goals. As indicated in previous questions, career issues were important to incoming students. When asked who was the most important role-model influence on their career choice (see Figure 2), students most frequently checked the "other" category. Of those students who checked one of the seven specific categories supplied, females most frequently chose mother while males chose father. Written materials and "other" were the greatest sources of career knowledge for both men and women (females = 28% and 16%; males = 24% and 19%) (see Figure 3). High anticipated earnings were most important in influencing the long-term career choice of males, while females reported that intrinsic interest in the field was more important to them (see Figure 4).

UNSC participants were asked to respond to the statement: "The three occupations that are my vocational goals right now are:". Responses were then coded into one of the six Holland (1970) vocational types (see Table 3). Combining all three responses, students chose occupations in the following categories: Investigative (32%), Enterprising (26%), Realistic (15%), Social (15%), Artistic (12%), and Conventional (1%). Males, when compared to females, had lower percentages of Social types (9% vs. 21%, respectively) and higher percentages of Realistic types (20% vs. 9%, respectively).

FIGURE 2: THE MOST IMPORTANT ROLE-MODEL INFLUENCE ON CAREER CHOICE

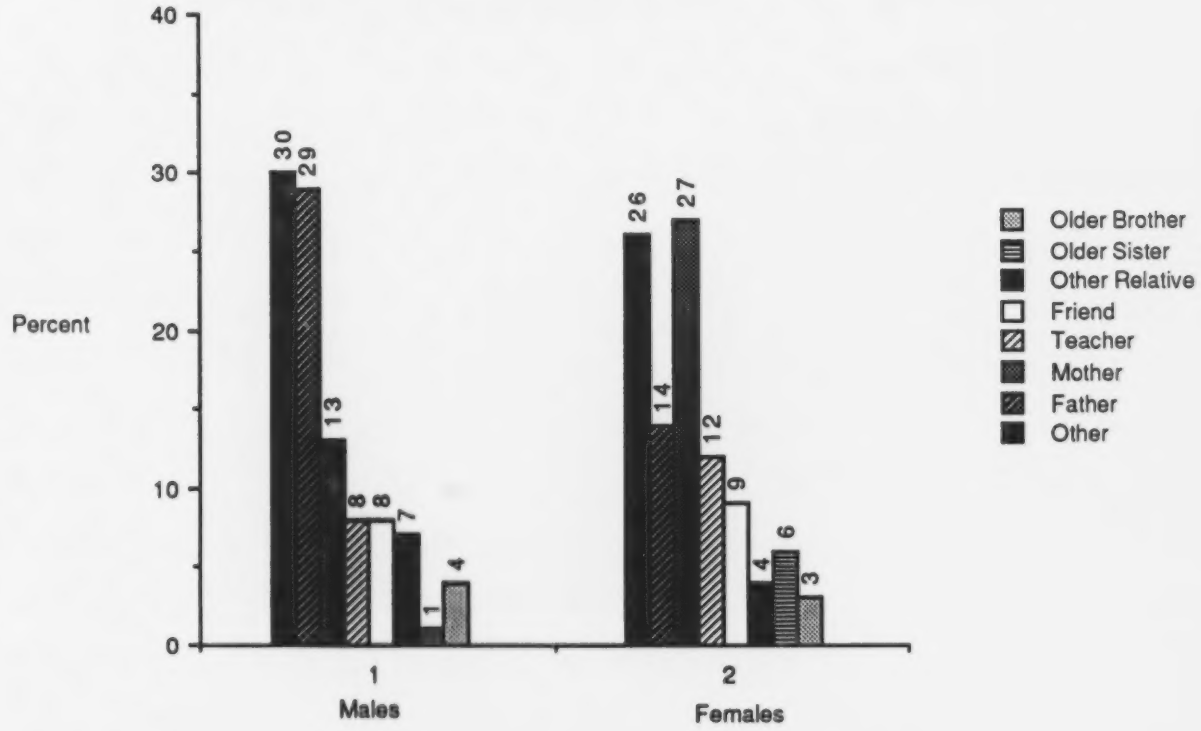


FIGURE 3: SOURCE OF CAREER KNOWLEDGE

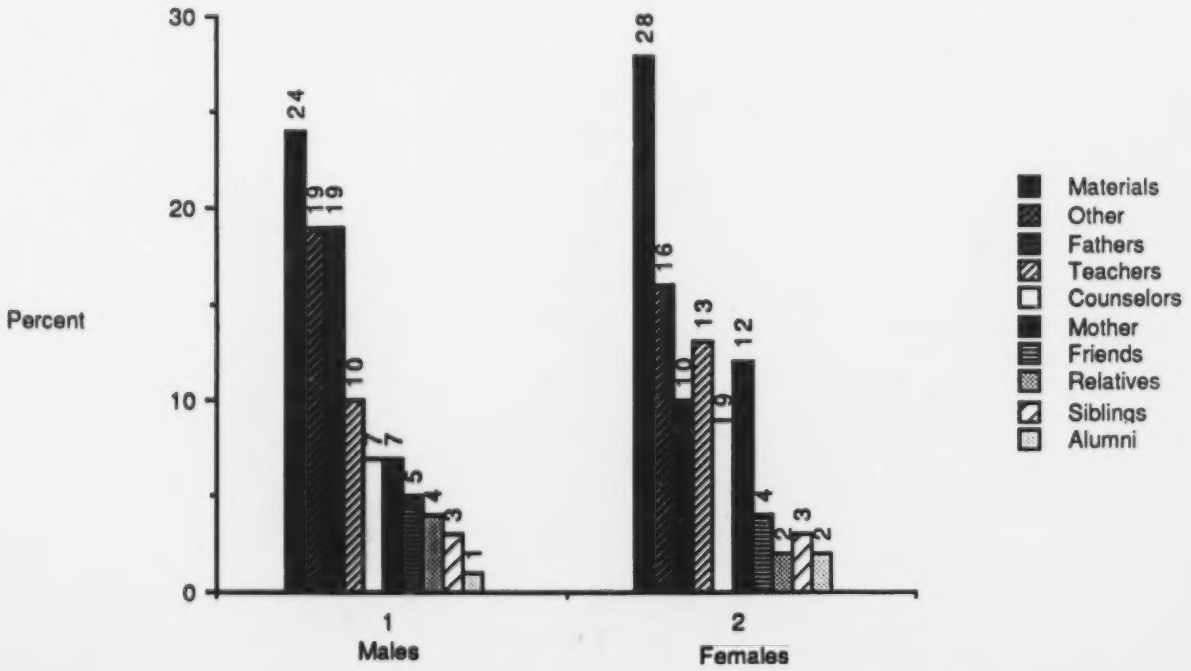


FIGURE 4: THE MOST IMPORTANT INFLUENCE ON LONG-TERM CAREER CHOICE

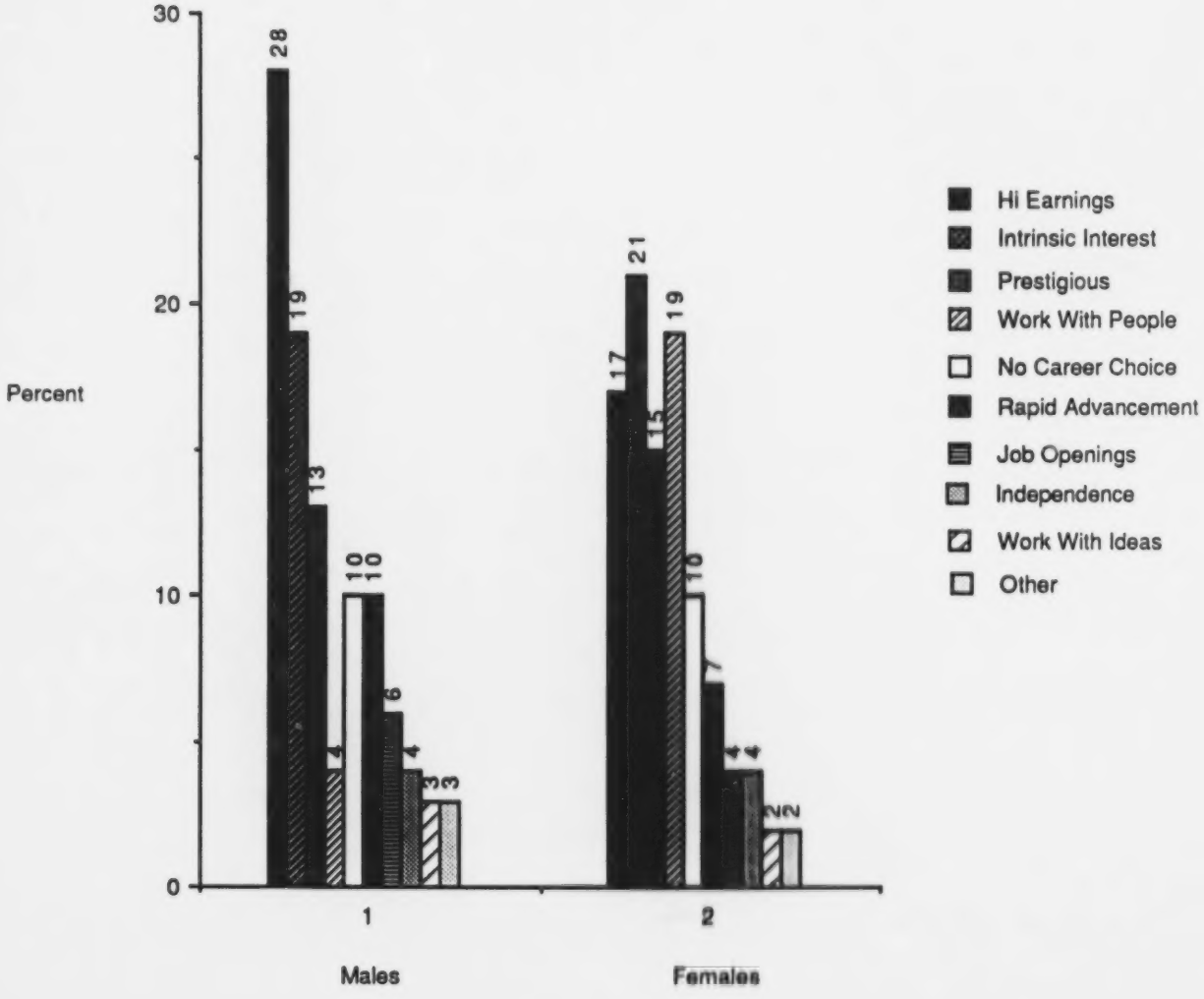


Table 3

Holland Types	Career Themes	Types of Occupations Preferred
Realistic	Rugged, practical, enjoys working outdoors, enjoys working with things more than ideas or people, especially with tools and large machinery	Agriculture, nature, mechanical activities, construction work
Investigative	Likes working with ideas more than with people or things; enjoys solving abstract problems; creative	Design engineers, social scientists, laboratory technicians
Artistic	Artistically inclined and likes to work on activities requiring self-expression; original, creative	Artists, composers, actors, poets
Social	Social and outgoing; concerned about the welfare of others; enjoys being center of groups; prefers to work with people rather than ideas or things	School superintendent, clinical or counseling psychologist
Enterprising	Great talent with words and putting to use in selling, leading, and dominating; enjoys power, status, material wealth	Salespersons, business executives, realtors, politicians
Conventional	Prefers highly structured work settings; enjoys office work and fits well into large organizations	Bank examiners, statisticians, tax experts, computer operators

EXTRA-CURRICULAR PURSUITS

Group Identity. More than a quarter of the incoming freshmen expected to identify with residence hall groups during their first year at UMCP (females = 29%; males = 26%). A number of freshmen did not plan to identify with any of the groups mentioned on the **UNSC** (males = 20%; females = 16%), while the remainder of the freshmen were expecting to identify with a variety of groups: a campus athletic group (males = 22%; females = 13%), a fraternity or sorority (females = 15%; males = 10%), a campus academic group (females = 8%; males = 7%), a campus social or non-academic group (females = 9%; males = 6%), an off-campus organization (3% for both males and females), or a political group (females = 2%; males = 1%).

Leisure Time. Men and women were significantly different in their preferences for extra-curricular activities. Men more strongly agreed than women that they would participate in recreational sports activities, but most of the students of both sexes planned to participate (47% strongly agreed and 34% agreed compared to the 7% who disagreed). Men were more likely than women to closely follow UMCP athletic teams (means: males = 2.69; females = 3.30 where 1 = strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree) although forty percent of the incoming freshmen did not closely follow UMCP athletic teams.

When given a list of various extra-curricular activities, more men than women were inclined to select athletic pursuits (males = 57%; females = 34%), although for both sexes, this was the activity chosen by the largest number of people. Freshmen also were interested in special interest groups (females = 17%; males =

16%), music and drama (females = 11%; males = 8%), "other" (females = 10%; males = 8%), political/social action groups (females = 10%; males = 3%), student publications (females = 8%; males = 4%), subject clubs (females = 4%; males = 3%), religious activities (females = 4%; males = 2%) and volunteer services (females = 3%; males = 1%).

Cultural Pastimes. Thirty-one percent of the freshmen had not visited an art gallery/exhibit in the last year, while 23% had gone more than twice. Plays were slightly more popular (76% attended at least once), with women attending an average of 2.5 plays last year compared to 1.8 for men. Eleven percent of the incoming freshmen had attended more than two noncourse-related lectures in the past year; 64% had not gone to any. Compared to other cultural activities (art, plays and lectures), music was the most popular leisure time activity for both men and women. Fourteen percent of the students had attended more than five concerts/recitals in the last year while only 17% had not gone to any.

Religion. About a third of the incoming freshmen were reared as Catholics (Protestant = 20%; Jewish = 18%; no religion = 10%; "other" = 18%). Eighty-three percent of the students identified themselves as presently members of a religion: Catholic = 31%; Jewish = 17%; Protestant = 17% and "other" = 19%. Males were more likely than females to report none (22% vs. 12%). Eighty-two percent of the students attended religious services at least once a year and 26% generally attended at least once a week. Sixty-six percent of the students felt that their personal philosophy or religious faith was very or fairly adequate as a guide for their outlook and behavior; 12% felt it was inadequate.

Students were polled as to their present political position: far left (males = 2%; females = 1%), left (males = 5%; females = 3%), liberal (males = 31%; females = 17%), middle-of-the-road (females = 36%; males = 35%), conservative (males = 31%; females = 17%), far right (males = 2%; females = 1%), completely apolitical (6% for both males and females), and "other" (females = 6%; males = 3%). Students were then asked about their agreement or disagreement on three social issues. Thirty-five percent of the students thought that UMCP should actively recruit Black students, 47% neither agreed nor disagreed, 13% disagreed and 5% strongly disagreed. Forty percent believed the University should use its influence to improve social conditions in the State, 48% were neutral and 12% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Almost half (49%) of the students disagreed that financial assistance should be based more on merit than on need, 33% were neutral and 18% agreed or strongly agreed.

COUNSELING

Seventy-nine percent of the students believed that they understood human sexuality well; 5% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Almost half of the students indicated an interested in educational/vocational counseling (14% strongly agreed, 31% agreed) and, 10% an interest in emotional/social counseling. While there was not a significant difference between men and women for educational/vocational counseling, men disagreed more strongly with the statement that "I am interested in seeking counseling regarding emotional/social concerns."

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